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Letter dated 1 February 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit the summary of an international colloquium of high-level representatives and experts on the theme "Creating stability and prosperity in Afghanistan and the region", held in Vienna from 26 to 29 October 2006 (see annex). The meeting was organized by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs.

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be published as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 16 and the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Christian **Wenaweser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 1 February 2007 from the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Creating security and stability in Afghanistan and the region

Summary report: Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination

The Liechtenstein Institute on Self-Determination (LISD) at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs convened the colloquium, "Creating Stability and Prosperity in Afghanistan and the Region," on 26-29 October 2006 in Vienna, Austria. This was the eighth LISD-sponsored colloquium on Afghanistan since 2001 and was the inaugural meeting of a two-year project, "State Security, and Prosperity: Afghanistan, its Neighbors and the Region," being undertaken by LISD and funded in part by the Carnegie Corporation of New York.

Participants outlined critical issues currently facing Afghanistan in terms of the state's security, rule of law, mobilization of the economy, and trans-border issues such as infrastructure and energy. More than fifty leading experts participated from the U.S., E.U., and the region representing academia, the diplomatic community, governments, and the private-sector active in the region. The colloquium was opened by H.S.H. Prince Hans Adam II of Liechtenstein, and was chaired by LISD director, Wolfgang Danspeckgruber.

BACKGROUND AND CURRENT CHALLENGES

The government of Afghanistan, the Afghan people, and the international community are at a critical threshold. The security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated sharply during the summer of 2006, marked by increased fighting between the Taliban and NATO, suicide bombings, and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). There was a decline in security incidents in the weeks following the conclusion of NATO's Fall 2006 Operation Medusa in Kandahar province and with the onset of winter. However, consensus opinion maintains that this lull in insurgent activity will be short lived. Internal and external factors widely recognized to be fueling the insurgency and obstructing the successful prosecution of key reform processes – such as the disbandment of illegal armed groups – must now be effectively addressed in order to prevent Afghanistan from drifting into an abyss toward which many Afghans and the international community increasingly fear that the country is headed.

The security and stability of Afghanistan has become the international community's litmus test in a post-9/11 environment, but one that has largely been overshadowed by the situation in Iraq. As a historic first for a NATO "out of area" operation, the international community, particularly the U.S. and the E.U. has far more at stake in Afghanistan than just the country's fate and success in state-building. Success in Afghanistan is critical for any future hopes of a globally engaged and active NATO presence for reconstruction and stability.

Five years after the Bonn Agreement an increasingly bleak perception of the future clouds the hopes of Afghans and international observers. Common views in Afghanistan hold that the international community will ultimately decide to reduce its presence and involvement in Afghanistan. This is a fear supported by mounting discussions of a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and the belief that deals have already been made between Pakistan and the Taliban. Although these views have not been validated by any explicit international actions and have repeatedly been countered by U.S. statements, they continue to cause concern. In addition, nascent international donor fatigue is a real factor. This fatigue is fueled by limited progress in the broader state-building agenda, as well as the dominant culture of corruption within important sectors of the Afghan government, a resurgence of Taliban activity, and the spread of poppy production and narco-trafficking.

Lack of capacity at all levels of government and limited absorptive capacity make clear that Afghanistan needs time to develop, but the Afghan government too often demonstrates insufficient political will and leadership over

fundamental political issues linked to a reform agenda. A culture of impunity remains the norm, with Afghans widely perceiving the police as corrupt and judicial systems as unresponsive. In spite of some recent positive changes, the thorny problem of reforming the Interior Ministry, on which police reform depends, is only now being addressed while progress toward establishing the rule of law and reforming the judiciary proceeds at a generally slow pace. Moves by the Afghan government and the international community to implement meaningful assistance and reforms have been insufficient and uncoordinated.

There is particular concern about the recent dramatic increase of Taliban activity and the heavy fighting between the Taliban and NATO since July 2006. The Taliban increasingly utilizes local perceptions of state failure and proffers swift remedies based on harsh forms of "social justice." Insurgent attacks have been accompanied by a growth in the use of IEDs, a tactic not utilized in Afghanistan prior to its widespread use in Iraq. Suicide bombings in Afghanistan have increased from one in 2001 to five in 2003 to nearly 100 in 2006. NATO-Taliban fighting has resulted in a high death toll of more than 4,000 Afghans combined with approximately 120 casualties among NATO troops. It is widely anticipated that the dramatic increase in insurgent activity seen during 2006 will begin again on an intensified scale during the Spring of 2007. Anticipated military operations and civilian casualties will come at a heavy humanitarian cost to the Afghan people and at a political cost to the Afghan government and the international community.

Afghanistan has furthermore become the world's largest poppy producer with current levels of poppy production at the highest rate in the country's history. Drug production is a threat to the stability of the fragile Afghan state and fuels insurgent activities. In spite of international efforts toward poppy eradication, opium cultivation in Afghanistan increased by 59% in 2006 alone. There are additional fears that this increase in drug production is contributing to increased drug use in Afghanistan and the region, raising concern that the country's weak social and medical services will be unable to contain increasing narcotics usage and the associated risk of HIV/AIDS.

The regional compact seems to be broken, as evidenced by the strained relationship between Presidents Karzai and Musharraf, and requires immediate attention in order to create new arrangements and a working regional process. The relationship between Kabul and Islamabad is seriously deteriorating and regional moves by the U.S. place added strain on the already tenuous relationship. The new U.S. approach to bilateral relations with India, including the nuclear agreement, as well as India's increasing activity in assisting Afghan development, causes concern for Pakistan and has altered the regional status quo. Newly intensified Indian-Iranian energy relations contribute to Pakistan's perception of its geopolitical encirclement. For Pakistan vis-à-vis India, this brings Kabul back into a "strategic hinterland" while encouraging reliance on limited nuclear deterrence. Pakistan's deals in the border areas have raised questions about Pakistan's commitment to the war on terror although President Musharraf continues to assure his country's commitment. It furthermore appears that much of the regrouping and replenishment of the Taliban, as well as a revitalization of al-Qaeda, takes place in neighboring Pakistan.

Trepidations about possible future U.S. and/or Israeli military operations in Iran – Afghanistan's western neighbor – only aggravates the situation further. Predictions that the U.S. may reduce its military presence in Afghanistan, turning over regional responsibilities to NATO forces – regional responsibilities which do not evoke the same confidence among locals – cause general concern for Afghanistan's medium-term security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is imperative to recognize that committing additional resources will not by itself create a positive trajectory for Afghanistan. Only a unified strategy based on Afghan realities will be capable of restoring hope and confidence among Afghans that their government and its international partners are moving in a direction that will lead toward security, stability, and prosperity. This requires combined coherent action from the Afghan government and the international community in addressing the sources rather than the symptoms of the deepening political and security crisis. The following recommendations focus on four critical areas: security issues and the Taliban; the rule of law and governance; economy, infrastructure, and international donor policy; and a new regional compact.

Security Issues and the Taliban

Restoring Afghan confidence in the political process is now of the utmost urgency. The growing success of the Taliban in the east and south of Afghanistan is tied to public perceptions of the lack of Afghan government capacity to be responsive to the needs of the people and a guarantor of human security. This perception derives from daily experiences with corruption in the police, local administration, and the courts; the utilization by the Taliban of inter-tribal rivalries; activities of local officials and organized criminal syndicates who control the narcotics trade; and an overall lack of delivery by the government of basic services including food, healthcare, water, power, and road access. International donors have been largely unable to provide any significant degree of assistance to people in unsafe and unstable areas giving veracity to the statement made by General Karl Eikenberry, Commander of the Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, that "where the street ends, the Taliban begins."

To counter Taliban influence, the Afghan government with international community support should reform the security and governance apparatus at the local levels and refocus the security discussion to include human security. Afghan ownership of these changes and initiatives is essential and should be buttressed by ongoing international support and engagement in Afghanistan. This must be done to counter the viewpoint among the international community that it should limit its activities in Afghanistan given that so much has been done to assist the country but with little avail. The international community must agree on an overarching, security sector reform strategy in which an integrated approach is central at the strategic level and strong international support exists at the tactical level.

Moreover, the Afghan government in concert with the international community should create a public information strategy that can positively shape the perceptions of local people. Media surveys indicate that Afghans place the most trust in the BBC Pashto and Persian services and Voice of America broadcasts. NATO/ISAF plans to expand transmission country-wide in 2007 neglects the understandable Afghan perception that ISAF broadcasts are biased and therefore untrustworthy. As with other reform initiatives, Afghan agency is paramount. An effective information campaign can only be conducted if and when professionally qualified Afghans are in the driving seat with effective support from international media organizations. A new media strategy focused on providing timely, objective, and neutral news is critical to support broader reform efforts.

Because Afghans fear that the international community will abandon them – a justifiable perception given Afghanistan's history – public outreach initiatives must move beyond winning their "hearts and minds" to include their perceptions of the international community's commitment and staying power. The perception of Afghanistan in the West is also vitally important especially since recent western media coverage about Afghanistan has become increasingly negative, sensational, and focused on the deteriorating security situation. There is a growing perception, due in large part to the increase in suicide bombings and the ferocity of fighting in the south, that Afghanistan and Iraq are linked as a singular disaster. The backgrounds, and current political and strategic situations in Afghanistan and Iraq are very different indeed and this viewpoint is incorrect and counterproductive.

Short-Term Initiatives

Police and Government Reform

• Bolster Afghan confidence in the government through the replacement of corrupt governors and police chiefs with honest individuals at provincial and district levels in large numbers, to indicate clearly that the government has turned a new page. Arresting known leaders of criminal groups, especially those involved in narcotics smuggling who are or closely linked to the government, will also assist in establishing the integrity of the central government.

• Exert sustained international pressure if the government fails to remove the 12 chiefs of police recommended for dismissal by the Police Probation Board, established after anomalies were introduced into Tier 2 of the

Afghan National Police Pay and Rank Reform process. Those identified for dismissal by the Board should not be "recycled" elsewhere by the government.

• Use conditionalities, especially related to international donor aid, to make reform of the Interior Ministry and meaningful police reform a priority for the Afghan government. These should especially focus on incentives related to the reform of the police and taking strong action against known criminals within the government.

• Boost the E.U.'s engagement in police training and mentoring in the provinces. This is dependent on an E.U. member-state commitment to Interior Ministry reform and at least a doubling of the number of police mentors and trainers sent beyond Kabul.

• Focus international support on ensuring that the Auxiliary Police operate within the framework of the rule of law while broader reforms within the Interior Ministry take place.

• Increase salaries for "hot spot" assignments within the police force, including a shift to a transparent and comprehensive approach for incentivized payments.

• Enlarge recruitment efforts and the visibility of women police officers as part of an overall effort to bolster the popular perception of the integrity of the police force. It must be noted however that Afghans widely assume that female police officers are themselves morally corrupt (i.e. prostitutes), and that an increase in the number of policewomen likely will not in and of itself create a positive perception of the police force.

• Incentivize training and leadership by providing higher salaries upon completion and in increasing oversight of the use of police assets, for instance police cars, for "second jobs."

Information Dissemination

• Facilitate the development of a local media capable of engendering people's trust and confidence through its professionalism and objectivity.

• Accelerate the development of a national public service broadcaster via the reform of the state-owned Radio and Television Afghanistan.

• Promote a wide-scale information campaign through an Afghan Public Broadcasting System. Broadcast messages should include assurance that the international community will remain in Afghanistan and stories of success and progress within Afghanistan.

• Inform press in the West about progress being made and positive stories to be told. Focus should include separating international perception of Afghanistan from that of events in Iraq.

• Support broader democratic rights by protecting the rights of the media. This is especially important because freedom of expression is under grave threat as conservative elements in government encourage parliamentarians to strip the draft Mass Media Law of key provisions designed to protect the independence of the media. The media law will come before parliament after 20 January 2007, following the next recess. Lobbying parliamentarians to support the unadulterated version of the law is crucial to protecting the emerging democratic process.

Mid- to Long-Term Initiatives

Police and Government Reform

• Focus police reform on training, leadership, rank, and dramatic salary reform, including increased political support for the actions.

• Overhaul international assistance to the police sector, building on the sound foundations laid by the German Police Project and responding to the new challenges.

• Develop new strategies to address the corrosive effect of narcotics and counter-narcotics on the Afghan National Police.

• Create a new strategy for salary distribution oversight, and incentives related to low salaries.

• Structure international assistance to the police, including Auxiliary Police, to support them adequately in both their long-term civilian policing and short-term paramilitary roles.

• Develop welfare mechanisms for the families of Afghan National Security Force personnel, which is particularly needed since often they come from remote areas.

Information Dissemination

• Reverse the international community's current funding strategy and provide increased support for the development of a professional and independent media sector fundamental to the functioning of any democratic process and essential for the holding of future elections.

• Direct more focus on successes and spell-out the cost of failures to the Afghan people. Simply portraying the "glass as half empty" is not constructive. Emphasis should be placed on how to fill the glass up.

• Prioritize the message to Afghans that the U.S. and the international community at large will remain in the country and the region for the long term.

The Rule of Law and Governance

The Afghan government should pursue immediate and cost-effective changes to strengthen the rule of law and rebuild public confidence in the government. The Afghan government must address the closely linked issues of ineffective rule of law, poor governance, and corruption that threaten to undermine the fragile democracy. A stronger judiciary is critical to gain the popular support and public confidence that are fundamental to short-term success and long-term sustainable elected government. Other major challenges include weak government institutions, limited government presence in the regions, and frustration with government officials in areas where the Afghan government does exercise authority.

Government of Afghanistan Initiatives

• Reform the Interior Ministry to reduce corruption and enhance efficiency.

• Replace corrupt mullahs and judges whose presence in government compromises public confidence.

• Improve conditions for incarcerated prisoners to respect the rights of the accused.

• Develop an official hiring policy and institute systematic reviews to fill local level government positions.

• Develop stronger relationships between formal and informal justice systems.

• Link resources to results in law enforcement in order to incentivize progress, particularly in the provinces.

• Establish electoral legitimacy at the provincial level through local elections.

• Improve evidence collection in current operations, proceeding with indictments following military actions.

International Community Initiatives

• Pressure the Afghan government to ensure more equitable ethnic representation in power, as a trust building measure.

• Encourage the government to formalize civil service positions and regularize appointments.

• Provide governors with terms of reference that include a job description, so that officials understand that they will be evaluated and held accountable for their work.

• Institute a longer rotation period and work to ensure continuity and unity of effort within the Police Mentoring Program. Nations that contribute to the program should work to formalize a multi-year plan for police that acknowledges how the international community will fill the gaps in the short term (six months), medium term (two to three years) and long term (four years and beyond).

Economy, Infrastructure, and International Donor Policy

The Afghan government and the international community should focus on basic infrastructure development, including power and water development and delivery, and the construction of national and regional road and rail corridors. The government of Afghanistan, in concert with the international community, must also work to improve the business climate within Afghanistan by targeting key immediate projects to enhance Afghan ownership, drive investment in Afghanistan, and use Afghan goods while laying out resources for longer-term development of skills and structures for growth. International donors should give the Afghan leadership greater responsibility for setting development priorities and funnel a greater portion of assistance to the government budget. Donors should include Afghanistan in donor budgeting for the 2007 financial year, despite current questions of Afghan aid absorptive capacity.

Short-Term Initiatives

• Develop a market strategy to attract new industry investments, provide alternative opportunities to poppy production, and better position Afghan products to substitute imports from China, India, and Russia wherever possible.

• Publicize Afghan products that can attract foreign investors and disseminate foreign investment success stories.

• Encourage small-project and/or village-level investment.

• Develop mechanisms for aid absorption by targeting the labor market. This could include the development of skilled-labor agreements and programs to reduce the contentious competition for a limited pool of qualified workers; the creation of incentives to bring women into the workforce; increasing U.S. Peace Corps involvement at the grassroots level, with a staffing primarily of seasoned Peace Corps volunteers; and the development of educational initiatives such as regional scholarship opportunities for Afghan university students and vocational training in the wider curriculum.

Mid- to Long-Term Initiatives

• Develop a structure for the distribution of resources/financial gains arising out of natural resource development (e.g. designing a credit scheme for farmers).

• Focus on the development of water infrastructure that can bring about manufacturing opportunities, such as in paper production, that can afterwards be fed by rain water.

• Open up "silk road" routes and focus on developing industries that would spur domestic consumption, such as the cement industry which figures so strongly in reconstruction.

• Encourage and plan an Afghan rail-link system, both in the form of a domestic ring-railroad linking the major cities of Kabul, Mazar, Herat, and Kandahar, and in a star-form railroad connecting to the neighbor states. This will provide both for an internal, virtually weatherproof infrastructure to transport mass and heavy goods and for new, profit-enhancing links through Afghanistan from west to east (Iran to India) and north to south (former Soviet Union territories to Baluchistan).

• Create a recognizable trademark such as "Silk Road Made" that would identify high quality products from Afghanistan and the region.

• Create the position within the government of an economic "tsar" with power above the bureaucratic structure to facilitate development and foreign investment and that can overcome local-level obstacles.

• Develop Afghan capacity to review foreign investment tenders for projects, rather than having them only reviewed by the Asian Development Bank and other international institutions. The Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA) would be a good model.

A New Regional Compact

Afghanistan's internal and economic stability cannot be isolated from the political and economic tensions and power struggles across the region. Afghanistan's future rests on the region's ability to forge a new compact that neutralizes regional and great power rivalries in the region. The new regional compact envisages a security mechanism that would provide an institutional security structure to work toward a common understanding of regional tensions and challenges. It would also form a mechanism to increase Islamic state engagement in the region and commitment to Afghanistan's viable future. It is dangerous and ill advised – particularly in view of the overall international attention on Iraq and increasingly on Iran – not to address the situation in Afghanistan and the region. The strategic lynchpin is provided by Iran, since both Iraq and Afghanistan are its immediate neighbors and developments in one tend to influence the situation in the others. Any further degeneration in the U.S.-Iran relationship will have destructive effects on Afghanistan.

To achieve the new regional compact, the U.S. and E.U. cannot approach bilateral relations with Afghanistan without a consistent and comprehensive regional policy that ties their Afghan relations to those with India, Iran, and Pakistan, and more broadly with Russia and China. The international community cannot be perceived as disengaging from Afghanistan, and part of this is the adoption of a regional strategy.

Short-Term Initiatives

• Stop the great power rivalries being played out in Afghanistan by stressing Afghan sovereignty and declaring Afghan neutrality in the region.

• Institute a Regional Security Compact and processes to lessen the influence of regional tensions on Afghanistan and to allow the region to identify and work to address current challenges while also targeting the increased involvement of regional Islamic states (i.e. U.A.E approach).

• Utilize this Compact to focus on the relationship between Afghanistan and its neighbors, particularly with Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and China.

• Address the Pakistan-Afghan border delineation through the Tripartite group, developing options within a joint commission, and presenting options to each Parliament.

Mid- to Long-Term Initiatives

• Prioritize economic integration as the primary tool in the fight for regional security and to soften the influence of Indian-Pakistan relations on Afghanistan and the region.

• Use the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation and the Economic Cooperation Trade Agreement to address regional concerns, such as land transit between India and Afghanistan through Pakistan ,and regional trade agreements and ways to empower Afghanistan in a South Asia Free Trade Area. Islamic countries of South East Asia can foster closer engagement with a view to increasing the Asia Cooperation Dialogue's work in Afghanistan.

• Open new cooperative economic arrangements, such as a Reconstruction Opportunity Zone, with Pakistan and other regional players to improve relations including support to the power purchase and gas pipeline projects, railway connection, and agreements related to Afghanistan's rivers.

International Community Priorities for Regional Policy

• Mobilize the U.S., E.U., and Russia to take a strong role in mediating the Regional Compact, placing focus on a consistent international message and a regional approach which recognizes the effects of bilateral changes in relationships with India and Iran.

• Encourage the U.S. and Iran to engage and collaborate on Afghanistan as an opportunity for cooperation and common ground amid the tensions between the two countries.

• Increase awareness in the U.S. and Europe of explicit linkages between actions in and sanctuary from Pakistan facilitating Taliban activities in Afghanistan and support stronger steps to relieve pressure on the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan. This should include regular cross-border reports to spread information.

• Reinvigorate a unity of purpose among international donors and actors in Afghanistan – led by the U.S., E.U., and U.N. – with a view to donor coordination. This should include renewed support for donor coordination bodies to decide on priorities, and identifying and addressing gaps in assistance.

Conference participants included: Christoph Alexander, Deputy Senior Representative of the U.N. Secretary General; Ambassador Munir Akram, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the U.N., New York; Lt. General Karl Eikenberry, Commander, Combined Forced Command – Afghanistan; Daan Everts, NATO Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan; Ambassador Robert Finn, Senior Research Associate, LISD; Joschka Fischer, Senior Fellow, LISD and Visiting Professor Woodrow Wilson School; Ambassador Robert Hutchings, Woodrow Wilson School Diplomat in Residence, former Director, National Intelligence Council, Washington, D.C.; Ali Jalali, former Interior Minister of Afghanistan; Ambassador Said Tayeb Jawad, Ambassador of Afghanistan to the U.S.; Thomas Koenigs, Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary General for Afghanistan; Fawzia Koofi,

Deputy Speaker of Parliament, Afghanistan; Mahmoud Saikal, former Deputy Foreign Minister of Afghanistan; M. Masoom Stanekzai, Senior Advisor to H. E. the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan; Barbara Stapleton, Political Advisor, Office of the Special Representative of the E.U. for Afghanistan; J. Alexander Thier, Senior Rule of Law Advisor, United States Institute of Peace; Amb. Francesc Vendrell, E.U. Special Representative to Afghanistan; Andrew Wilder, former Director, Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, Kabul.

Additional information about the colloquium, including the conference program and full participant list, is available online at: www.princeton.edu/lisd/projects/afghan_region/afghan_region.html.

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